

In fact, Jennifer, who goes by J.P., was part of Team Merkley before there was a Team Merkley.

In 1998, J.P., who had a passing interest in international affairs, called me out of the blue to ask for an informational interview when I was head of World Oregon. So we got together, and I was immediately impressed by that conversation. So I immediately recruited her for a project that we had funded to archive 50 years' worth of World Oregon's records.

It takes somebody with a real organizational mind and energy to accomplish that kind of task, and once we saw her at work on our team, I knew I would have to do everything I could to keep her with us, and she ended up staying with us in many different roles—from bookkeeper to office manager to programming speakers on international issues.

But we couldn't keep her forever because the international world called to her. The Peace Corps called to her, and she started a new chapter in her life of service when she joined the Peace Corps and headed to Albania as part of the first group of volunteers to reenter the country after civil unrest broke out in 1997.

During her 2 years in Albania, she worked with civil society organizations and with children living on the streets and survivors of human trafficking. She worked on enrichment programs to help at-risk Roma girls, a minority population in the country. She secured \$65,000 to increase participation of disabled citizens in municipal decision making.

Her time in-country was so transformative that after her Peace Corps stint ended, she remained in Albania for another year, working as deputy head of mission for a transnational project to combat child trafficking in Kosovo, Greece, and Albania. In that role, among a whole host of great accomplishments, J.P. struck a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with the Albanian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, which led to the opening of child protection units—child protection units that are still in place and operating to this day.

I can only imagine how many young children have led better lives because J.P. helped open those centers.

So Mary and I arrived here in 2009 and started on this adventure of serving in the Senate, and we pondered: Who can fill this key role, this essential role of scheduling? Who would be the bridge between our office life and our family life? Who would be the extraordinary individual who would serve as a hub for the entire team?

And then we suddenly realized that J.P. was back from Albania and that she was right here in Washington, DC, continuing her terrific work on human trafficking at the Labor Department. It is pretty important work, and we were not sure we could pry her away, steal her away, from that to be on our

Senate team, but, fortunately, we held our breath and she said yes, and we are so lucky to have had her with us this last 14 years.

It was J.P. who initiated my "Good Morning, Oregon" meetings. Every Thursday while we are in session, we open the doors of our conference room to welcome Oregonians who happen to be here in DC for a discussion and a good cup of Stumptown Coffee.

It was J.P. who initiated our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to address unconscious bias, to work to ensure greater inclusivity, to better integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of our team's work, internally and externally.

It was J.P. who organized our annual staff retreats, both in Oregon and in DC, with unique exercises, including this last year's Scrollathon that made us all ponder our key mission and shared commitment to public service.

And when COVID upended life as we knew it, she stepped in, took charge, and innovated new human resource strategies and helped our team pretty seamlessly transition to the scary world of Zoom and Skype and Teams and other countless tools to ensure we could continue to function on behalf of the people of Oregon.

It was J.P. who strived, year after year, to set the atmosphere of competence and graciousness and supportive connectedness as team members navigated the challenges of both our work life and our home life. She loved nurturing team members as they sought to grow and thrive in their careers.

And I think you would be very hard-pressed to find a member of my team over the past 14 years who did not, at some point, go to J.P. for insight or sage advice.

Over time, J.P. grew in her career, taking on ever-newer and expanded parts of our team work. She was no longer doing the day-to-day scheduling, but was our deputy chief of staff, keeping our whole operation running smoothly.

Now, life often travels in circles. J.P. was an integral part of my team at World Oregon; and after serving in the Peace Corps and returning from Albania, she again became an integral part of my team here in Washington, DC.

And now, J.P.'s life is completing a circle. Seventeen years after her Peace Corps work in Albania, she is returning to help the Peace Corps thrive in the position of Executive Secretariat in the Office of the Director. And I could not think of a better person to help organize that team leading the Peace Corps. Their mission is to help build a better world for all, and my dear friend, my family member, J.P., is just the right person to undertake that mission.

J.P., I cannot begin to thank you enough for all you have done in each chapter of service throughout your life: your service at World Oregon, your service in the Peace Corps, your service

following up in that extra year in Albania, your work at the U.S. Labor Department combating human trafficking and, of course, here in the Senate as a founding member of our team. Thank you for all of that terrific work. And we know that the work you are going to continue to do to contribute to making the Peace Corps an incredibly effective organization will be a significant way to help build a better world. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session to be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING TOM EMBERTON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last month, Kentucky lost a statesman, a model gentleman, and one of the key mentors of my early career. Former Kentucky Court of Appeals Judge Tom Emberton of Edmonton, KY, passed away this October in a tragic house fire, a sudden and devastating loss for the entire Commonwealth. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Tom's legacy of public service and paying tribute to his extraordinary career.

Tom was born and raised in south central Kentucky and prioritized service to that distinctive community from the outset of his career. He served a 4-year tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force then returned to the Commonwealth for an undergraduate degree at Western Kentucky University and a law degree from the University of Louisville School of Law. Not long after, he moved to Metcalfe County to serve as county attorney, beginning his long work on behalf of the region.

I first got to know Tom a few years later when, upon returning to Kentucky after a stint in Washington, DC, I got involved with his 1971 gubernatorial campaign. Four years prior, Louie B. Nunn had become the Commonwealth's first Republican Governor in two decades, and Tom bet he could build on his success to bring another four years of conservative leadership to the Commonwealth. Tom's campaign was instructive for me; he traveled all across Kentucky, including to deeply Democratic strongholds, to preach the Republican policies that most Kentuckians agreed with but, historically, did not vote for. Ultimately, Tom couldn't pull out a win that year—my future colleague in the U.S. Senate Wendell Ford was elected—but he earned respect from leaders and voters across Kentucky.

Tom was undeterred by his electoral loss and returned to Metcalfe County